

Education and Society in Karnataka

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Education, Social Inequality, and Social Change in Karnataka by Chitra Sivakumar; Hindustan Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1982; pp 145, price not mentioned.

THE purpose of Chitra Sivakumar's study was to find out how the composition of college students' population and attitudes of women students reflected social change during the sixties. She used demographic data, educational records, and data obtained through interview schedules. She selected a women's college and a co-educational college for special study, and from these two colleges she picked a sample of 1,306 women students for the study of attitudes. She went to Mysore and spent over a year with her sample with the aim of combining ethnographic insights with survey data. These insights make her study different from run-of-the-mill studies of the sociology of education in India, and especially different from doctoral sociology to which this work also belongs.

One of the two most interesting portions of this book is the historical account of higher education in Mysore state during the British period. The other most interesting portion is the appendix titled "Lessons in Apprenticeship", but more of that later. Chitra Sivakumar shows how the opportunities of obtaining college education and state employment were first exploited by the Brahmins more extensively than by any other caste group. In 1911, Brahmins constituted 3.6 per cent of the population of Mysore state, but their representation among students attending colleges in 1916 was 79 per cent. On the other hand, lower non-Brahmin castes which formed one third of the state population had no representation in college admission registers. In between the two extremes were the dominant peasant castes, Lingayat and Vokkaliga, whose representation in college registers was minimal. These peasant castes soon realised the value of education, and their educated members eventually led a 'non-Brahmin' (euphemism for anti-Brahmin) movement towards dominance in politics which involved both the freedom movement and the struggle for the benefits frugally dispensed by colonial masters. Compared to Brahmins, the peasant castes were

backward; they did, however, dominate and exploit those below them, including the untouchables, usually by pretending to represent them. The untouchables' progress in education had to wait for measures of protective discrimination to become somewhat widely available.

CS looks at this history from a structural functionalist perspective, and comes to the conclusion to which this perspective usually leads, namely that education is an instrument of social mobility and change. Inasmuch as sociological conclusions must depend on choice of perspectives, the structural-functionalist faith in the power of education is valid. However, it is not clear how a structural-functionalist viewpoint distinguishes between the role of education as an 'instrument' of change and as an instrument of acquiring legitimation. If one were to look at the history of education in British days with this distinction in mind, one might arrive at conclusions radically different from the ones popular in India. The popular view, which CS apparently supports, is that English education opened up avenues of free competition for upward mobility. Educational records all over India, and indeed all over the colonised world, indicate that colonial education was mostly used by powerful groups to acquire a new symbol of their status, and to acquire new skills and knowledge to perpetuate their domination under new rules of the game of power. It is true, of course, that dominant groups could not altogether stop subordinate groups from using education to enhance their own status. But the dominant did what they could to slow down the spread of education among the subordinate. CS acknowledges this in the case of the relationship between the peasant castes and those below them, using M N Srinivas's observation in Rampura village in the forties as a basis:

... the economically and politically powerful leaders from the Vokkaliga caste, while welcoming the introduction of electricity and other facilities to the village, did not however fav-

our the opening of a school there. The former could have helped in the extension of their economic interests, while the latter could have resulted in labour shortage and inculcation of a certain arrogance among their subordinate castes, (p 31)

What, then, is the role of education in the process of social change? The data CS collected are neither directly concerned with nor useful for answering this question. Her aim is to show how social, especially cultural, change finds reflection in educational institutions. However, her ethnographic narratives do suggest that educational institutions can play an ambivalent and subtle role in the process of change in values and relationships. For instance, the narrative dealing with strained teacher-student and teacher-principal relationships in one of the two colleges shows the birth of defiance and group-consciousness among women students. One of the fall-outs of student solidarity in the college was the conservative principal's denial to give 'good conduct' certificates to student leaders. More recent history shows that such decisions by authorities helped students everywhere in the country to develop cynicism towards tokens of patronage.

"I had not dug deep enough into the lives of students and their academic milieu", CS says in a charmingly written first-person appendix article, referring to the state of her feelings when she returned to Delhi after completing her fieldwork in 1964. Notwithstanding this disappointment, most of her probing insights seem to have come from the field-observation data. Her analysis in Chapter 3 'of the data concerning social origins, educational opportunity and social mobility is not as impressive. One source of weakness in the analysis of these quantitative data is the absence of a well-articulated questionnaire. Tables based on census and college records are provided, then dutifully translated into prose for what looks like too broad an aim to be rewarding in terms of any one of the variables. No cross-tabulation is attempted, even on a limited sample, between data of caste distribution, income groups, and educational "background of parents. Nor do we see any careful comparison made between women and men students although CS did collect data from two additional colleges, one of which was restricted to men. In the absence of comparative

analysis, she relies heavily on familiar guesses about why the appearance of 'social change' indicators was delayed in the: 'case of women'. Such guesses include 'sexual inequality' and 'patri-lineal ethos'. The study of attitudes reported in Chapter 5 does, to an extent, bring out the relative strength of these factors, but only in an indirect manner.

Attitude data were collected from a sample of 189 women students stratified according to caste, income and educational background of parents. Attitudes studied were the ones towards caste, marriage, male-female relationships in student life, joint family, and female employment. Whereas 73 per cent of the sample stated that the caste system was unnecessary, only 52 per cent approved of inter-caste marriages, and barely 15 per cent admitted willingness to marry outside their caste. The three variables used for stratifying the sample were found to have little to do with students' attitudes except in the case of attitudes towards the caste system. The largest group of caste-supporters was identified among students from the poorer Brahmin homes. Interestingly, educational background of parents had no impact on students' attitudes. CS promises to explain this but does not.

Indeed, it would be hard to explain the conservative undercurrents of education without taking into account the internal world of education, namely the curriculum. What does 'education' teach? Few sociologists in India have bothered to take up this question. Most sociological studies one comes across treat education as what Michael Apple, the writer of "Ideology and Curriculum", calls a 'black box'. CS could have sharply departed from the black box tradition by looking at the structures of knowledge prevalent in the colleges she studied, telling us the relative popularity of different subject options, and further, by sketching out the content of knowledge to which students are exposed under these options. CS does indicate her interest in the inner view of the black box by giving us glimpses of teacher-student interaction which of course is a part of the curriculum. Although she stops short of analysing the pattern of interaction, and she refrains from drawing implications from interactional data regarding the subtle relations between education and society, her study does indicate that she does not regard the inner world of education unworthy of

a sociologist's attention. We can look forward to her next work.

Hindustan Ciba-Geigy

HINDUSTAN CIBA-GEIGY, a subsidiary of the well-known Ciba-Geigy of Switzerland, has voluntarily decided to dilute foreign equity shareholdings from 65 per cent to 40 per cent in two phases, although RBI had agreed to allow it to retain foreign equity upto 51 per cent. The company is now making an issue of 3,81,400 equity shares of Rs 100 each at (a premium of Rs 40 per share to reduce foreign equity holding to 51 per cent. The second stage of dilution, which will further reduce foreign equity to 40 per cent, will be implemented next year. Starting initially as a trading company in India in 1920s, it is today highly diversified with the bulk of its activities being concentrated in the core sector. It has plants at Bhandup and Mazagaon in Bombay, Santa Monica in Goa and a 100 per cent export-oriented manufacturing unit at KFTZ. The company manufactures a wide range of drugs and pharmaceuticals, consumer products, pesticides and bio technical products (purely for export). It processes and markets dyestuffs and chemicals. It also markets toothbrushes and synthetic resins. The company is pre-

sently engaged in implementing a number of ongoing projects. In addition, it has got letters of intent/industrial licences for manufacture of EPN resins, organic phosphates/phosphites, polyurethane resins, textile auxiliaries and Cefamezine. Out of total capital expenditure of Rs 18 crore envisaged for ongoing new projects, Rs 12.66 will come from internal accruals and Rs 5.34 crore from the present capital issue. The company has an impressive past record of sales and profitability, except for 1980 and 1981, when its operations were adversely affected by a prolonged labour unrest at Bhandup plant. Between 1978 and 1982, sales have risen from Rs 54.89 crore to Rs 87.59 crore and gross fixed assets from Rs 19.5 crore to Rs 38 crore. Pre-tax profit for 1982 was Rs 6.13 crore and after-tax profit Rs 4.93 crore. The company has an uninterrupted dividend record extending over 35 years. It declared 12 per cent dividend for 1982. It has made 5 bonus issues since 1966 which lifted paid-up capital from Rs 3.25 crore to Rs 13.89 crore. The last bonus issue was in the ratio of 1:2 in 1980. As at the end of 1982, reserves and surplus stood at Rs 14.91 crore, giving a book value of Rs 207 per Rs 100 share. The public issue is managed by Grindlays Bank's merchant banking division. Subscription list opens on July 25.

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